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TAGS: [ELAB](#) [KCRM](#) [KPAO](#) [KWMN](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SMIG](#) [AL](#)  
SUBJECT: GOA REACTION TO 2008 TIP REPORT

REF: A. STATE 58457  
[1](#)B. TIRANA 152

Classified By: AMB. JOHN L. WITHERS II FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Ambassador Withers demarched Foreign Minister Basha on the 2008 Trafficking in Persons Report findings (Ref A) and DCM and Poloff delivered the same to Minister of Interior Nishani, Deputy Minister Zajmi, and Director of Police Prenci on June 3. Foreign Minister Basha was the first to receive news that the USG had downgraded Albania to Tier II Watch List status; Basha's face went pale when told. Other officials did not openly display shock, likely because they had been warned beforehand by Basha. Disappointment was the initial overall reaction. Since the public announcement of the TIP Report, there have been no strong public reactions from the GOA in the form of statements or firings directly related to the report. Local media reaction was strongly critical, focusing on Albania's drop in status as a failure on trafficking issues not seen since 2002 (when it was last on the Watch List).

[1](#)2. (C) More than two weeks after the demarches there is movement to address a few of the key issues raised in the report, particularly from the Albanian State Police (ASP). The ASP has, with input from our ICITAP office, drafted a short-term action plan. The ASP's anti-trafficking section has told the Embassy that they are motivated to do what they can to avoid the black mark of being named on the Watch List again. The ASP has particularly focused on our message for improved identification of trafficking victims and for training. The GOA's 2008-2010 National Anti-Trafficking Strategy was announced and approved days prior to the TIP announcement. Prime Minister Berisha has made few public comments on the report, with no statement in the days following its release and only passing mention of it since then.

[1](#)3. (C) COMMENT: The release of the TIP report came in the wake of a row with the Embassy on several political issues, which has not abated. As always, implementation will be key for the GOA to successfully improve its anti-trafficking programs. We had hoped that Watch List status would spur the GOA to take stronger action on human trafficking, but it remains to be seen whether this will occur. Instead, we may be entering a phase where our criticism on human trafficking, a lower priority for the Government than many other issues, is overshadowed by disputes with the USG on other fronts, including rule of law concerns and the Government's attacks on independent state institutions. The departure of National Coordinator for Anti-Trafficking Iva Zajmi for maternity leave on June 17 will leave a void in the GOA's anti-trafficking efforts. End Comment.

WITHERS